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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000637

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV
CDR PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BOMBINGS IN TACHILEIK

Classified By: COM CMartinez. Reason: 1.5 (d).

1. (C) Summary: No one has yet claimed responsibility for the bombings in Tachileik on May 21, though the Burmese have blamed the Shan State Army (South) and the Thai blame the Wa. The good news is that Thai and Burmese police officers are cooperating in the investigation, though it remains to be seen whether either side will turn up enough evidence to pin the case on the Wa, the Shan, or some other group. End Summary.

2. (U) No one has yet claimed responsibility for four bombings which left four people dead (two civilians and two police) in the Thai/Burmese border town of Tachileik on May 21. According to Burmese police, the bombs went off at a police station, a gas station, a power plant, and a monument to King Bayinnaung, one of Burma's heroes in its wars with Thailand. The Burmese have blamed Yawd Serk's Shan State Army (South), while Thai Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit has hinted that one faction of the Wa (led by United Wa State party Chairman Pauk Yu Chan's youngest brother, Pauk Yu Hwa) may be responsible. However, no one appears to have enough hard evidence to pin blame on any particular group.

3. (U) The attacks came at the end of a month-long series of bombings throughout Burma. Since April 15, bombings have occurred on a gas pipeline, in a cinema hall, at an archeological site in Pagan and in Tachileik. Altogether, the attacks have killed five and wounded more than fifty civilians. In addition, the government has outlined about 20 different incidents involving alleged assaults by Karen National Union and Shan State Army (South) troops on villagers in Karen and Shan States during the first four months of 2003. These attacks and ambushes killed 33 people (including 4 monks) and wounded 42, according to the government.

4. (U) The KNU has accepted responsibility for the pipeline bombings, but has denied involvement in any of the other incidents. According to KNU General Secretary, Pado Man Shah, the gas pipeline is a legitimate military target. The Shan State Army (South) has denied responsibility for all the attacks and has suggested that some of the attacks on villagers may have been carried out by Burmese Army soldiers dressed in SSA (South) uniforms.

Comment

5. (C) It will likely be some time before hard evidence is available to implicate one or another group in these recent bombings. It seems clear, however, that both the SSA (South) and the KNU are moving towards unconventional tactics, out of desperation or in response to Thai government efforts to restrict their activities. As Chavalit has suggested, narcotics may also play a role in the violence. In any case, the good news is that the Burmese and the Thai police forces are apparently cooperating in the investigation of the attack in Tachileik. The two sides may reach different conclusions, but at least they are sharing information, rather than trading accusations, as is usually the case. End Comment.

6. (U) This cable was coordinated with Amembassy Bangkok. Martinez